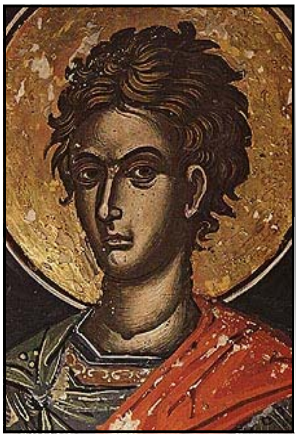

GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA
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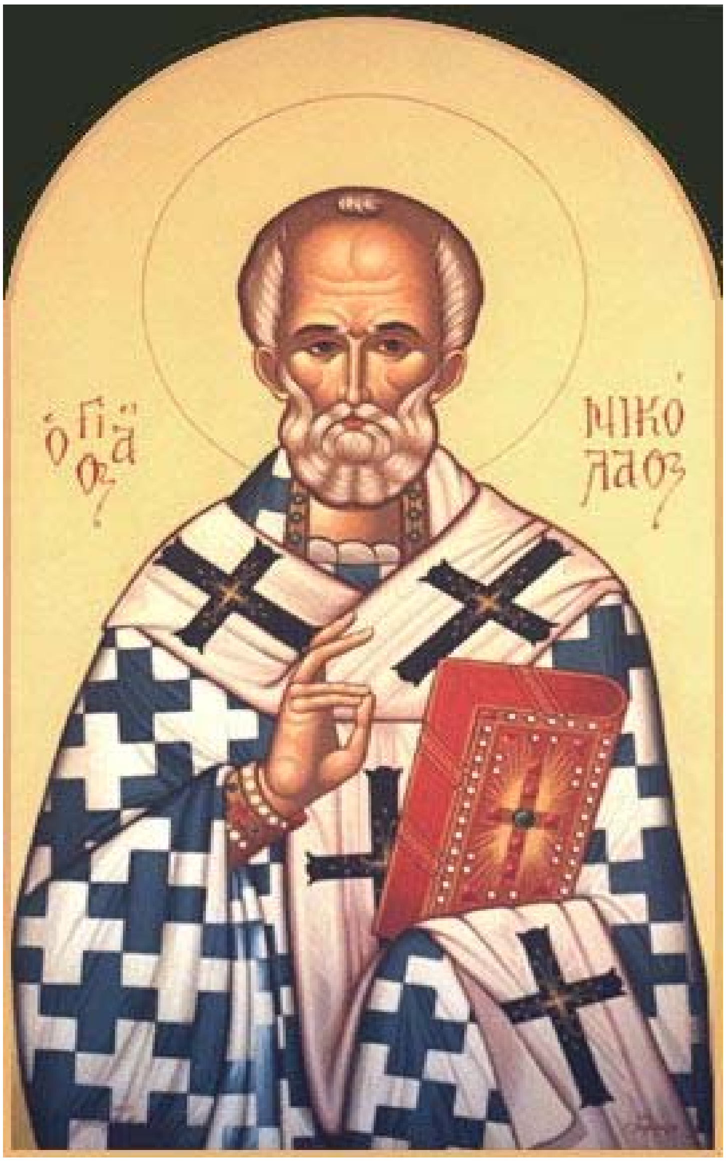
Saint Nestor

CENTRAL YOUTH COMMITTEE MAGAZINE

"I am the Resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live." (John 11: 25)

THE TRUTH OF THINGS HAS REVEALED YOU TO YOUR FLOCK AS A RULE OF FAITH, AN ICON OF MEEKNESS, AND A TEACHER OF TEMPERANCE; FOR THIS CAUSE, YOU HAVE ACHIEVED THE HEIGHTS BY HUMILITY, RICHES BY POVERTY. O FATHER AND HIERARCH NICHOLAS, INTERCEDE WITH CHRIST GOD THAT OUR SOULS BE SAVED



"I am the light of the world. He who follows Me will not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." (John 8: 12)

34th Sunday After Pentecost: Living Forgiven and Thankful Lives

Gospel Reading

Then it happened, as He was coming near Jericho, that a certain blind man sat by the road begging. And hearing a multitude passing by, he asked what it meant. So they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. And he cried out, saying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Then those who went before warned him that he should be quiet; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be brought to Him. And when he had come near, He asked him, saying, "What do you want Me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, that I may receive my sight." Then Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well." And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God. **(Luke 18:35-43)**

The message of the Gospel reading is ultimately one that commends to us perseverance. The blind man continued to cry out, even though all those around him tried to silence him. The blind man's cry, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me," is the most natural cry of a human soul. Any other cry is unnatural. You would think, if it is natural to us, that it would be easy for us to say, "Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner," and you would think that everyone around us would encourage us in this prayer, because it is the most important prayer that any of us can utter.

But those of you who have prayed know that what should be easy is not easy at all. You know that what should be the most natural response of our hearts is something for which we have to struggle. There are many voices that tell us to be quiet. Sometimes this is the voice of our pride: "Why do you cry out all the time, have mercy on me? You don't need to pray any more; you are beyond that."

Sometimes it is the voice of distraction, which says, "There are more interesting things to do. These are things which will be more important for you. There are things that you can be involved in that will give you more fun.

Sometimes the voices are the voices of sin, the voice of lust, the voice of anger, both of which enter into our soul and corrupt it so that we can no longer pray in clarity, "Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." The voice of self-love also seeks to silence our prayer.

Sometimes the voices that seek to silence us are the voices of our friends and families, who call us to leave behind the work of prayer so that we might devote ourselves to the things they are interested in and the things they want us to do. Then there is the voice of despair that says you are beyond the mercy of God.

Sometimes—and perhaps this is the most difficult one of all—the voice that seeks to silence us is the voice of silence itself. How often have you prayed, "Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner," and experienced in response not the voice of God, but rather the voice of silence. You feel as if there is no response to your prayer. You feel as if the heavens are shut up and your prayer does not even ascend to the throne of God.

All of these voices seek to silence our prayer. In the words of the Gospel, they seek to persuade us to hold our peace, to be quiet, and to let Jesus pass by.

Prayer is a struggle, and the struggle of prayer is not simply the struggle to make time for prayer. The struggle to get out of bed in the morning, to get to Church, or to stand in front of our icons and say our prayers—that is a struggle, but that is not the struggle of prayer.

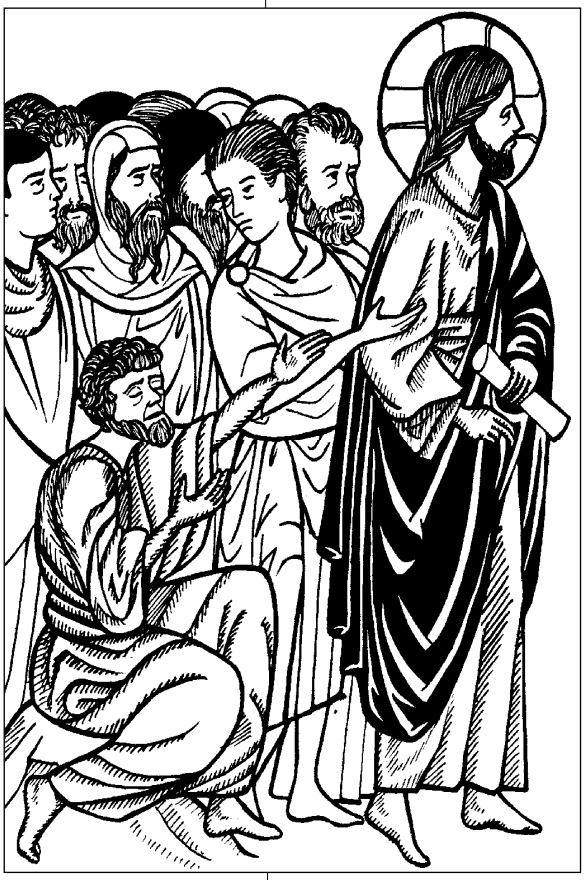
The struggle of prayer is much deeper; it happens after you stand in front of the icons. It is the struggle to find God. And we, like the blind man, cannot see God passing by. We struggle with that blindness, that emptiness, that silence, that despair that says our prayers are meaningless and worthless. There is so much sin, so much distraction, and so much of ourselves in our prayers that we struggle even to say our prayers and even to believe that our prayers are being heard.

(Continued on page 3)

34th Sunday After Pentecost: Living forgiven and thankful lives

(from page 2)

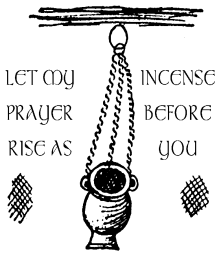
God waits, and God allows us to struggle. I often ponder on this Gospel reading. Why does Jesus allow His disciples to tell the blind man to be quiet? He could have stopped them; Jesus knew everything. Why did He allow them to go in front of Him and try to silence this blind man? We know it is not that He didn't care for the blind man, because he healed him. We know it was not that He was not touched by the blind man's illness and his plight, because His heart is full of compassion for everyone. We know it was not because He was too busy, because He stopped and listened and talked to this blind man. Why then did He allow others to try to silence him?



The answer is found in His words: "Your faith has made you whole." God knows that our prayer needs to be purified. If we understand that there is selfishness and self-love that expresses itself even in our prayer, how much more does God know how deep our pride and our self-love are and how much they infect our prayer.

So God allows us to struggle in order to purify our prayer. He allows us to struggle so that we might know our need, so that the prayer might become a cry from the very depths of our souls: Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me! In the beginning when we pray, we pray with our mind, with our will, with our lips. So very rarely do we pray with our heart and with our soul. It is so very seldom that the cry arises from the depths of our being and consumes our being, so that our fingers and toes and knees and elbows and nose and ears and eyes and all that we are is united in our prayer, and we cry out with our whole being, "Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner!"

Until that prayer has consumed us, until we become the prayer and the prayer is us, until our prayer becomes the cry of a man who is drowning, who has only one hope, and that is the mercy of God—until that is our prayer, then truly we have only begun to learn how to pray. So God allows us to struggle. The Fathers say that God hides Himself, that He blankets Himself in darkness. He remains shrouded in a mist and leaves us to wander as a blind man searching for Him, groping for Him, learning that we must first unlearn, coming to know that we must first come to the place of not knowing anything, so that we might be able to say, "Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner."



What this means is that we must persevere. Many of us are not the persevering type. How many fads does our culture go through every year? We want something, and we want it now. If we can't get it now, we try a little bit and then give up, because we don't know how to persevere, we don't know how to endure.

God is trying to teach us perseverance. I remember when I was a young, almost-teenager, I had these visions that I would look like Arnold Schwarzenegger. I looked at myself in the mirror, and I would pretend that I was six foot three with bulging biceps. My parents for Christmas bought me an exerciser. We lived in a small house, so although I wanted a huge set of weights, they bought me a little isometric exerciser.

The idea was that when you exercised against tension, that would develop muscle strength. I didn't use it very much, because it seemed to me to be a waste of time. When I went to school I couldn't say, "I pulled the exerciser twenty times last night." I wanted to say, "I bench-pressed 200 pounds."

But the principle that works in our physical life works in our spiritual life. God allows us to come up against tension, against resistance, so that spiritual strength may be developed in us, so that we might cry out unceasingly, "Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me," so that prayer might become the prayer of our entire being.

And if that prayer becomes united to our being, and if we persevere and endure, some day Jesus will come to us and say, "What do you want Me to do?" And we will say, "Lord, I am blind. I've searched for You all my life. Lord, I want to see You, I want to gaze upon Your beauty, I want to be enraptured with the sight of my Beloved." And the Lord will reach His hand out and say, "Child, you can now see, because your faith has made you whole."

(Journey to the Kingdom: Reflections on the Sunday Gospels by Fr John Mack, Conciliar Press, California 2001)

Words of Life

The word *accidie* means, etymologically, 'lack of care', i.e. about one's salvation. With few exceptions, all humanity is now living in the state of *accidie*. People have become indifferent about their salvation. They do not seek divine life. They confine themselves to forms of life which appertain to the flesh, to everyday needs, to the passions of this world, to mundane activities. God, though, created us out of nothing, in the image of the Absolute and after His likeness. If this revelation is true, then the absence of concern for salvation is nothing else than the death of the human person.

Despair is the loss of consciousness that God wants to give us eternal life. The world is living in despair. People have condemned themselves to death. We must struggle resolutely against despondency.

The life of the world is organized so as to accommodate certain human passions, and spiritual life is pushed into the sidelines. We should reverse this order, and put spiritual life at the heart of our life.

The wisdom of this world cannot save the world. The parliaments, the governments, the complex organizations of the most advanced contemporary states, are powerless. Humanity suffers without limit. The only solution is to find within us the wisdom and the resolve not to live according to the ideas of this world, but to follow Christ.

How can we find our way? According to the Gospel, Christ is our way.

What is important is the conviction that Christ is God. The person who loves Him will be near Him eternally, where he is.

If we want to be with Christ, with the Word of God on whom the Father has bestowed everything that He is from all eternity, we must see Christ as God-Man. When we think of His divinity, we recognise Him as perfect God. When we think of His humanity, we know Him as perfect Man. Wisdom, humility, life, eternal light, all are in Him.

Every step in our Christian life is inseparably related to the fundamental dogmas of our faith.

Just as Christ in Gethsemane and on Golgotha remained continuously mindful of the Father, so we too should live at every moment with our thought in God, though in our case our mind can do this through Christ rather than the Father. For it is by the Son that we reach the Father. In practice, this means that our life becomes Christ-centred.

The only thing which attracts us is Christ, the person of Christ. And we must live with Christ as the measure of everything, divine and human. In Christ, we have God our Creator. In Christ, we have the example, the revelation of God's plan for mankind. The love of Christ must fill our hearts, always. One cannot abide in God by intellectual reflection about Him. God reveals Himself in us by His action. We live Christ as our own life, not as someone we know from outside.

Christ said: 'I am the Way'. If He is the Way, we should follow Him, not outwardly, but from within. And we must remember that on Golgotha and in Gethsemane He was confronted by the hostility of everyone. Alone.

There are times, when the love of Christ touches us, that we feel eternity. This cannot be understood rationally. God acts in a manner proper to Himself, which is beyond reason. We must not be too logical in our Christian life.

There are 'exterior' signs which allow us to measure how far we are from God: are we following the word of the Gospel? Have we reached perfection, that is, love for the whole world, without distinction between friends and enemies?

There is no difference between the commandments of Christ and the life of God Himself.

By abiding in Christ's commandments, we organically become like Him.

How can we spend the day without sin, that is, in a holy manner? This is our daily concern. How can we transform all our being, our thoughts, our feelings, even our physical reactions, so as not to sin against our heavenly Father, against Christ, against the Holy Spirit, against a human person, against our brother or against any single thing in this life?

'O Lord, vouchsafe unto us to pass this day without sin'. I have often repeated to you this prayer of the Church. Life without sin on earth opens to us the doors of heaven. It is not a person's intellectual acquisitions which will save him. It is life without sin which prepares us for life with God in the age to come. The grace of the Holy Spirit teaches us eternal realities, insofar as we live according to the commandments of Christ: Love God your Creator with all your being and love your neighbour as yourself. Yes, always keep these commandments.

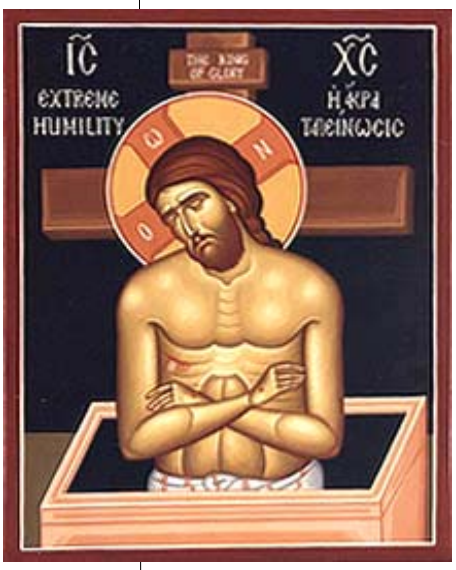
(Source: Words of Life, by Archimandrite Sophrony (Sakarov) Stavropegic Monastery of St John the Baptist Essex 1998)

The teachings of the Holy Fathers On the Passions - part 5

WARFARE WITH THE PASSIONS: GLUTTONY

"As far as food is concerned, individual needs vary according to age, employment, and physical condition…The objective, however—to satisfy need—must be common to all alike...The aim should be simply the sustaining of life; pleasure ought not to be the end in eating food. Since our body, ever being emptied and drained, needs to be filled (and for this reason our appetite for nourishment is natural), right reason tells us that we need only replenish that which has been used up;" more than this is unnecessary *(St Basil the Great, The Long Rules)*.

"One ought not to eat with savage gluttony, but in all things that have to do with pleasure we are to maintain moderation, quiet, and self-control. Nor may we omit thinking of God while we eat...bethinking us how various sorts of food which are suitable for the needs of our bodies are the result of the provisions of the great Steward of the universe" *(St Basil the Great, Letter to Gregory)*.



"In addition, we should always prefer that food which can be easily found, not concerning ourselves with costly fare, extravagant foods, or expensive sauces. Rather, we should choose from whatever is easy to obtain and is cheap" *(St Basil the Great, The Long Rules)*.

If necessary, "when the soul lusts for various foods, let us confine it to bread and water, to make it grateful for even a thin slice of bread" *(Abba Evagrius, Directions on Spiritual Training)*.

WARFARE WITH THE PASSIONS: LUST

"Our Forefather Adam teaches us that if he had not been conquered by his stomach, he would have lived with Eve as with a sister" *(St John Climacus, The Ladder)*.

St John of Damascus explains: "Virginity was practised in paradise...But once Adam and Eve had fallen, they realised that they were naked; being then ashamed, they sewed aprons for themselves. After the fall, when Adam heard the words, *dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou* return—for death had now entered the world through sin—then *Adam knew Eve his wife: who conceived and brought forth" (On the Orthodox Faith)*.

Sex, therefore, is a function of fallen human nature, just as is hunger. Neither sex nor hunger are evil so long as they are exercised within God-established bounds. But just as hunger is capable of becoming gluttony, sex easily becomes lust. Furthermore, there is a direct cause and effect relationship between gluttony and lust: "Gluttony says that her child is war against chastity" *(St John Climacus, The Ladder)*.

"He who wishes to defeat the demon of fornication through gluttony is like a man who tries to put out a fire with oil. *(St John Climacus, The Ladder)*.

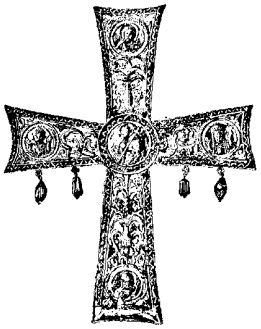
"Luxury is fuel for unreasonable lusts...Hence come fornications, hence adulteries. For a hungry belly (or one which has used just enough food) cannot generate lust. But that which produces unseemly lusts is that which has been relaxed through luxury. And just as land which is very moist...and wet through and through generates worms, while that which is free of excess moisture bears abundant fruits even if it has not been cultivated, the same is true of us". *(Ibid)*.

It is clear that the antidote to lust is fasting. "Lust is extinguished by hunger" *(Abba Evagrius, Directions on Spiritual Training)*.

Therefore "let us not fatten the body...He who throws food into the belly is just like someone who tosses it down a drain, only much worse. For the one who throws it down a drain does so without harming himself, while the one who puts it into his stomach generates innumerable diseases [passions]...for what is over and above our need, not only does not nourish," but gives rise to such passions as lust *(St John Chrysostom, Homily 29 on Hebrews)*.

(To be continued)

(Source: The Teaching of the Holy Fathers on THE PASSIONS, Nicodemus Orthodox Publication Society, New York 2004)



Confronting the Devil, Magic & the Occult: part 8

"White" Magic

Its Effect

On people

It prevents … adultery!

Roland Villeneuve, a well-known writer on the occult, refers to the following occurrence:

There was once a husband (an initiate of magic), who was about to set off on a long journey. He was certain that, during his absence, his wife would cheat on him. In order to keep his mind at rest, he asked the devil to guard his wife. This done, he left.

The first thing his wife did was to introduce men into the house. Every evening she received "visits". But what happened? No sooner did the woman get into bed than an invisible force propelled the stranger away from her. Every time she attempted to commit adultery (and she did so, often) the same pattern was repeated. In the end, try as she might, she was unable to cheat on her husband.

Her husband returned from his long journey. As soon as the devil saw him he said, "I've taken good care of your wife. But what I've had to put up with! I have really suffered. I've been through the mill. Please, do me a favour. Don't burden me with her again. I'd rather guard all the pigs in Saxony than your wife. She did everything possible to get the better of me and to run riot with her body."

It "Cures" Illnesses.

Let's say somebody is sick. This person is suffering. There is no hope for a cure. In their despair the relatives ignore the Merciful, Crucified Lord and turn instead to the misanthropic and murderous devil (a witch or wizard), in the hope of finding a cure.

The witch, with a doll, figurine or photograph in front of her, begins the therapy, her assistant being the devil and her medicines the bones from the left side of a frog, the blood of a hoopoe or a pigeon, the heart of an eel, the skin of a snake, a shroud or a blue stone. Archimandrite Meletios, from the Holy Monastery of Gregoriou on Athos, who is a missionary in Zaire, tells us how in 1984 he visited the town of Kolwezi. He found there a shaman who was curing lots of people through his magic.

St John Chrysostom tells us how the devil, as our enemy, doesn't want what's good for us. If he does cure us, he doesn't do so for our benefit, but to harm us. "The demons drove you out of Paradise, they deprived you of that heavenly honour, and now they're going to cure your body? They have no pity on the soul, so are they going to pity the body? They showed no mercy to the pigs they drowned in the sea, so why should they show any to your body?

And even if, with God's permission, the devil does cure you, don't think he's done you any good. He might have helped your body, but he's certain to have harmed your immortal soul, because the devil knows only how to do harm.

Of course, God allows the demons to cure you, in order to teach you a lesson, i.e., not to have anything to do with demons even when they're curing you.

I would rather die than run to Christ's enemies for a cure. What's the good, if my body is cured and my soul is harmed? What's the benefit of a little relief here on earth, if it means being cast into eternal fire?

And yet you, a Christian, instead of mourning, rejoice and are proud that the devil has made you well!

A Witch in the Dock

In 1994, the High Court in Athens sentenced a witch to imprisonment because she had exploited her cousin for financial gain.

It's worth looking at the way this extremely cunning woman fleeced her victim. The events, as they are related here, are taken from the court proceedings.

The witch divorced her husband in 1978. She then took up with and lived with somebody who made out that he was a wizard, a spiritualist and an astrologer. In order to fool their clients, they set up a separate room in their house, a special "oratory" that had icons, incense and candles, as well as magic symbols such as the pentagram and so on.

And people, unfortunately, kept coming to them.

As luck would have it, right next to them was her cousin's family home. He was the head of the financial section of the Social Security Office in Ayios Stefanos, in Attica. At work, he was honest and hardworking, but as a person he suffered from nerves and had psychological problems.

In 1986, he went to his family home to make some repairs. His witch cousin invited him in for coffee, introducing her boy-friend as her husband. The latter represented himself as someone who had dealings with saints and so on and as someone who did good to people with problems. This stuck in the mind of the cousin and he gave it great thought.

No more than a week passed before the man knocked at the door of the witch and her lover, requesting their help. The wizard took him into a separate room, the "oratory". He told him to lie down on a bed, unbutton his shirt, undo his belt and relax. He palpated various parts of his body and produced total relaxation and "calm". In the end, he read some incomprehensible words over him. His cousin, the witch, was at his side all this time.

The wizard then told him to get up and dress. All three of them repaired to the sitting-room. The wizard began to speak. "I can see that you've got a major problem. Your mother-in-law has put a spell on you. The worst of it is that you'll die in two months."

"That's right," agreed the witch with some warmth.

As you'd expect, the poor man was panicked. But his relatives told him they were more than willing to help counteract the spell.

"I'll tell you what; give us 200,000 drachmas to get rid of the spell and you'll give death the slip."

"Borrow it and don't tell anybody why you want it," advised the wizard, who, at the same time, was conjuring with the lights in the room to produce effects aimed

(Continued on page 7)

Confronting the Devil, Magic & the Occult

(from page 6)

at proving his miraculous powers. And this did the trick.

Frequently, the man went to visit these relatives of his, in the

hope that they had counteracted the magic. They kept him wound up. "We'll save you. It's only because of us that you're alive at all."

They played on him to such an extent that he had complete confidence in them. By various "magic" practices, they reduced him to a compliant tool and he did whatever he was told. He even made over some of his inheritance to them. But that wasn't all. He himself acted as a servant to them in their home.

As we mentioned, the victim had a good job. He was head of the financial section of the Social Security Office in Ayios Stefanos. These relatives of his now gave thought to the way they could best make use of his position. Whereas previously he had served at his post honestly and fairly, he now felt impelled by a strange force to steal money from work. This he did and handed it over to his "saviours." This was in June, 1988.

He kept on stealing and stealing. He was giving his relatives tens of millions of drachmas a month! When he found it difficult to steal, his cousin would get on the telephone and stiffen his resolve.

All in all, he stole and handed over to them the sum of 282,210,000 drachmas, while he himself didn't have enough money for a square meal.

On November 29,1991, the wizard was killed in a traffic accident. The witch was now all alone.

The Social Security Office finally caught up with the thief. Nobody could understand how this man, who was such an honest head of a department, could have stolen money. Charges were brought against him. His cousin arranged for lawyers to defend him and she herself paid their fees, because she was at risk herself.

The victim was held in temporary custody. He had with him a variety of magic amulets and tokens which were gifts from his cousin. Moreover, the witch, who was concerned that he would come to his senses and give her away, visited him regularly in prison. She gave him lots of support. But away from her constant, daily influence, the victim slipped away from her. He did, indeed, come round and recognise his "gaffe." He confessed.

Another lawyer undertook his defense. The witch panicked. She had to do something to protect herself and so she did. On the day of the trial, the new defense lawyer, according to his own report, felt strangely and uncommonly unwell. He could hardly stand and was unable to think clearly. He couldn't make a speech. It was the first time anything like this had happened to him in all his years as a lawyer. His secretary suffered from similar symptoms.

The witch had in fact performed her magic.

Although the lawyer had been indifferent towards religion, he went to confession the same afternoon, as did his secretary. They had a blessing service read and the office sprinkled with holy water. At once they recovered. They went to court. The witch vehemently denied that she had forced the victim to steal money or that she had paid his legal expenses.

Naturally, the court wasn't convinced. In August 1994, she was sentenced as the moral instigator of his crime.

Conclusions:

The magicians told their victim that he had been put under a spell, and that he would die in two months. In other words, they told him outright lies.

If anyone goes to magicians (or astrologers or fortune-tellers) and is told that a spell has been put on them and so on, they can be sure this is a lie.

They told him these lies in order to fleece him of his money. If you go to magicians, they'll lie to you and fleece you as well.

The man had psychological problems, but instead of doing the decent thing and lending him moral support, they seized the opportunity to destroy him! There is no humanity in these witches and their like. They'll stop at nothing.

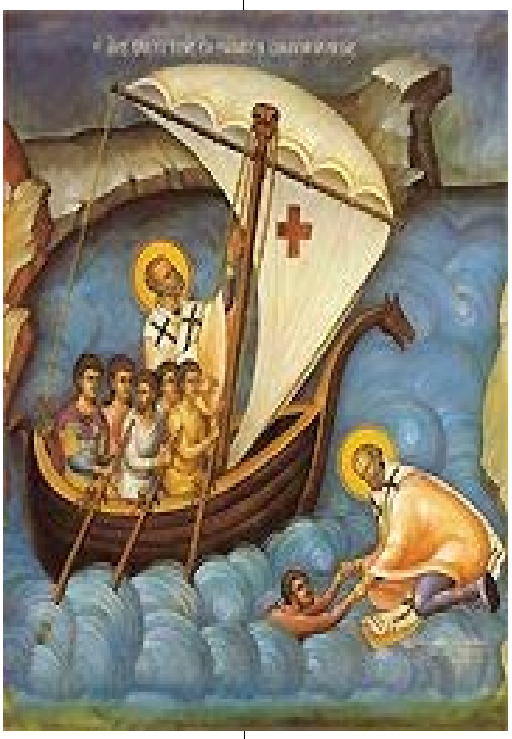
Poor, wretched people, who go running to liars to find a solution to their problems! ***(To be continued)***

(Source: Confronting the Devil, Magic & the Occult by Archim. Vassilios Bakoyiannis, Orthodox Book Centre, Athens 2003)

"Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner"

St Nicolas the Wonderworker, Archbishop of Myra: 6th December

Our holy Father Nicolas, emulator of the Apostles and ardent imitator of the Lord Jesus Christ, appears as a living model of pastoral solicitude for holy bishops. Through his countless miracles on behalf of the poor, the abandoned, of those suffering injustice and of all who call upon his fatherly protection, he has to this day shown himself a *good steward of the manifold grace of God* (1 Pet. 4:10).



St Nicolas was born at Patara of Lycia towards the end of the 3rd century, to Christian parents who had long been childless. From infancy, he showed his love of virtue, and his zeal for observing the ordinances of the Church by abstaining from his mother's breast on Wednesday and Friday's until the evening. Pious and inclined to silence, he was educated in theology and, while still young, was ordained priest by his uncle, Archbishop Nicolas. For many years vigil, fasting and prayer were the virtues he excelled in, but from the time of his parent's death and his giving away his inheritance to the needy, the virtue of almsgiving became his greatest glory to God-ward. He regarded himself merely as the steward of goods which belonged to the poor and took particular care to keep his good deeds secret, so as not to lose the heavenly reward (cf Matt. 6:7). On three occasions he secretly left gold enough for the marriage portions of three maidens whom their debt-ridden father intended to give up to prostitution. When the man eventually discovered his good deed, Nicolas made him promise, as he valued his salvation, to tell no one of it.

God recompensed him through the charismata and miracles for which he became renowned in the sight of men. On pilgrimage to the Holy Places he twice by his prayer calmed the winds that imperiled the ship he was sailing in.

Soon after his return, an Angel made known to the synod of bishops, meeting to elect a shepherd for the nearby city of Myra, that they should choose Nicolas—which they did, to the joy of the people. During the last great persecution under Diocletian and Maximian (c. 305), St Nicolas was thrown into prison, where he continued to confirm his spiritual flock in the faith. With the accession of Constantine, he was very zealous for the destruction of idolatrous temples and for driving out the demons that inhabited them. Among the Fathers gathered at Nicaea in 325 for the first Ecumenical Council, Nicolas was one of the leading champions of Orthodoxy against the impious heresy of Arius, which had so swiftly sprung up to trouble and divide the holy Body of Christ.

He saved the city of Myra from famine by appearing to the master of a vessel laden with corn, and telling him to discharge his cargo at the harbour there. Later the man of God saved the lives of three Roman officers unjustly accused of conspiracy, by appearing in a dream to the Emperor Constantine and to the perfidious Prefect Avlavius. Full of gratitude to the Saint for their deliverance, the three soldiers became monks.

On many other occasions, after his death as well as during his lifetime, St Nicolas has miraculously assisted ships in distress and people making voyages, and so is venerated as the protector of all who sail the seas. Thus, one day during a gale, he appeared at the helm of a ship in distress and brought it safely to port; and, on another occasion, he rescued a passenger who fell overboard crying, "St Nicolas, help me!" and at once found himself at home surrounded by his astounded family.

For many years the holy Bishop was, as the presence of Christ, the

(Continued on page 9)

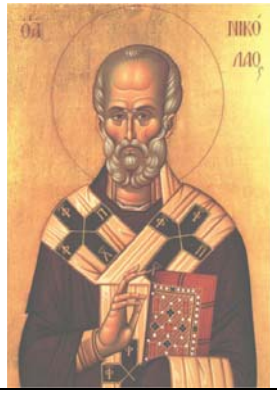
St Nicolas the Wonderworker, Archbishop of Myra: 6th December

(from page 8)

Friend of man and *Good Shepherd* to his faithful; there was no misfortune that would not move him to compassion, no injustice that he would not redress, no discord that he would not allay. Wherever he happened to be, his illumined countenance and the atmosphere of radiant peace surrounding him were instantly recognisable. When he fell asleep in peace his people lamented the loss of their pastor and their providence, through whom they had received so many benefits, but the angels and Saints rejoiced with great joy to receive the meek Nicolas among them. His holy relics, placed in a church built in his honour in Myra, were venerated by crowds of pilgrims every year. One day the Devil, unable to tolerate the glory that shone from St Nicolas' tomb, took the form of a poor old woman and accosted some pilgrims who were leaving for Myra, lamenting that she was not able herself to travel, and entrusting them with a flask of oil for the lamps that burned perpetually before the shrine. During the voyage, Nicolas appeared to the ship's captain and told him to throw the magic oil into the sea. No sooner had he done so than the surface of the water caught fire and swirled about in blazing eddies to the terror of the passengers, who gave thanks to God for having saved the sanctuary through his Saint. In 1087, after Myra had fallen to the Saracens, the holy relics of St Nicolas were translated to Bari in the south of Italy accompanied by many miracles, and there they were venerated to this day (cf. 9 May).

St Nicholas, with St George, is one of the Saints most beloved by Christian people in the East as well as in the West. The churches dedicated to him are as countless as the places and the faithful named after him. He is especially revered by the Russian people as the protector of crops, and in the West he is regarded as the patron of schoolchildren and of young people in general.

(Source:The Synaxarion:The Lives of the Saints of the Orthodox Church by Hieromonk Makarios of Simonos Petra, translated from the French by Christopher Hookway Vol. 2, Ormylia (Chalkidike) 1999)



Occasional Prayers IN TIME OF ILLNESS

For oneself

Holy Father, physician of souls and bodies,
who sent your only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,
to heal every illness and redeem from death,
heal also me your servant
from my present illness of body and soul,
and give me life, by the grace of your Christ;
through the intercessions of our most holy Lady Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary, and all the Saints.
For you are the source of healing, O God our God, and to you we offer glory,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
now and ever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

For others

Master, Lord of Sabaoth, our God,
Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
sitting upon the Cherubim and praised by the Seraphim,
dwelling on high and watching over things below,
making the sun to rise on the good and the bad,
sending rain on the just and the unjust,
governing and guiding with indescribable power and wisdom all creation and life,
chastising and restoring to health;
receive me as I approach your goodness,
and do not feel loathing for me a sinner,
but hear the voice of my prayer,
and send help from your holy dwelling
out of compassion for the creation of your hands,
you who listen to the prayers of all,
and heal your servant (name)
from the illness which has come upon him/her.
For you are the one who has mercy and saves us, our God,
and to you we offer glory,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
now and ever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

The Book of Psalms

Authors: David and others
Date: About 1000–400 B. C.
Theme: The Songs of God's People

AUTHOR: Among the authors of the Psalms are David, the temple musicians(such as Asaph and Jeduthun), Ethan and Ezrahite and the "sons of Korah."

DATE: The Psalms were written at various times, most likely beginning in the time of David (c. 1000 B.C) and for several centuries thereafter.

MAJOR THEME: *The songs of God's people*. The Psalms are the hymnbook of Israel, and now of the Church. Each psalm has its own theme, as noted in the titles.

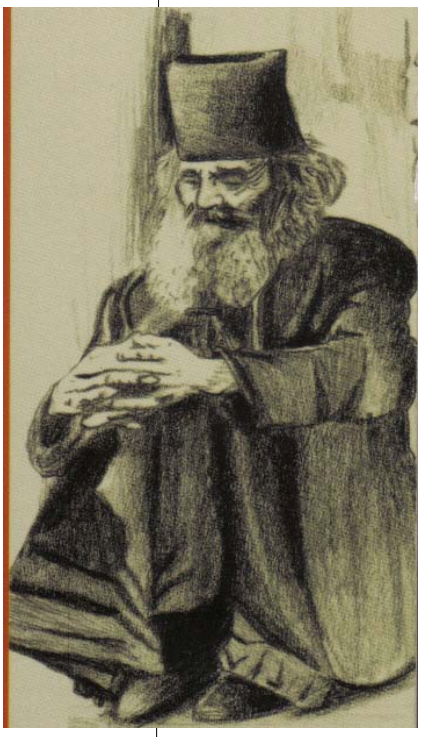
BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

(1) ***Types of psalms***: The Psalms are of many types, including: (a) prophecies of the coming Messiah, (b) prayers for the king, (c) personal lamentations, (d) songs of praise, and (e) hymns for special feasts.

(2) ***The prayer book of the Church***: The Psalms have become for the Church, as for ancient Israel, a book of prayer and praise. All reach their fulfillment in Christ, the Son of God. Not only do the Psalms predict specific events of Christ's life, but in them He Himself intercedes for and with His people before the Father. The Psalms could also be seen as a dialogue between the Church, the body of Christ, and Christ her Head. Therefore, they make the most sense to us when they are prayed, not simply read.

(3) ***Uses in the Church***: The Book of Psalms, or Psalter, is used in the Orthodox Church in three primary ways:

a) ***In the daily cycle of prayers***. The liturgical tradition appoints certain psalms as "fixed" portions of the daily services.



b) In the ***weekly*** order of the morning and evening services (Matins and Vespers). When these are done in their entirety, as in the monasteries, all 150 psalms are chanted in the course of the week, starting at Saturday Vespers and concluding at Matins the following Saturday.

c) In the observance of the Church ***year***, the liturgical tradition selects particular psalms or verses for special feasts or seasons as prophetic statements illustrating the work of Christ for us. For example, the Passion Song of Psalm 22 ("they pierced My hands and My feet") is used in the Church on Good Friday. This use of the Psalms is crucial to our understanding of the fullness of Christ's ministry to His people.

(4) ***Purpose***: The Psalms serve many functions. They (a) foretell coming events, (b) recall history, (c) frame laws for life, (d) suggest what must be done to obey God's word, (e) are a treasury of good doctrine, (f) help overcome the passions which exercise dominion over our souls, through the power of poetic expression to take over and gradually transform our thoughts.

(5)***The two texts of the Psalms***: In the ancient Church, and yet today in the Orthodox Church, the preferred text of the Old Testament is the Septuagint (LXX), a Greek translation completed by the 2nd century B.C. Septuagint means "seventy" (hence the Roman numeral shorthand "LXX"), deriving from the tradition that Ptolemy Philadelphius (285-246 B.C.) directed 70 or 72 scholars to translate the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek for use in his library at Alexandria. By the time of Christ, most Jews scattered throughout the Greek-speaking world did not know Hebrew and therefore used the Septuagint text. Even in Israel the Jews used the Septuagint or an Aramaic (the language of the people) text, rather than the Hebrew. Consequently, Christ and the New Testament writers generally quoted the Old Testament from the Septuagint. As the early Church spread throughout the Empire where Greek was the common language, she used the Septuagint version of the Scriptures. Thus it was only natural for the Church to use the Septuagint in her liturgical texts.

Some thirty years later after the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the remaining Jewish leadership in the area called a council of Jewish teachers at Jamnia, near Joppa, which, according to tradition, decided a distinctively Jewish Old Testament text was required, written in Hebrew. Scholars (the "masoretes") edited and copied that Hebrew version from the 6th to 10th centuries A.D.; thus it is known as the Masoretic Text (MT).

The Church continued to prefer the Septuagint, however, the Greek language was known by most Christians, and because of its messianic and prophetic sense. But later in the West, Latin became the dominant language and a Latin Old Testament (the Vulgate) came to overshadow other texts. Thus, until the Reformation, Christian worship and doctrine developed from Greek and Latin Old Testament versions.

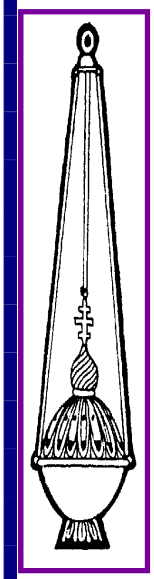
Steered by the Renaissance concept of appeal to antiquity, and by their own antagonism to anything Roman Catholic, the Reformers bypassed Rome's Vulgate and the Septuagint used by the Eastern Church to claim the "original" text as its abbreviated canon, the Masoretic Text. The NKJV Book of Psalms is, therefore, translated from the Masoretic Text.

(Source: The Orthodox Study Bible, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, Tennessee 1997)

From the Old Testament - The Psalms

Psalm Nine (9)

GOD'S RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT UPON ENEMIES



I will praise You, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will tell of all Your marvelous works. I will be glad and rejoice in You; I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High.

When my enemies turn back, they shall fall and perish at Your presence. For You have maintained my right and my cause; You sat on the throne judging in righteousness. You have rebuked the nations, You have destroyed the wicked; You have blotted out their name forever and ever.

O enemy, destructions are finished forever! And you have destroyed cities; Even their memory has perished. But the Lord shall endure forever; He has prepared His throne for judgment. He shall judge the world in righteousness, And He shall administer judgment for the peoples in uprightness.

The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed. A refuge in times of trouble. And those who know Your name will put their trust in You; For You, LORD, have not forsaken those who seek You.

Sing praises to the LORD, who dwells in Zion! Declare His deeds among the people. When He avenges blood, He remembers them; He does not forget the cry of the humble.

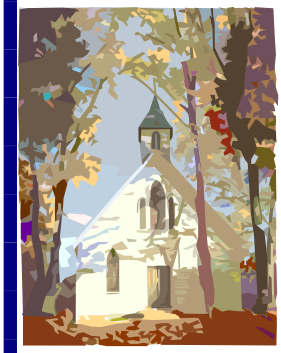
Have mercy on me, O LORD! Consider my trouble from those who hate me, You who lift me up from the gates of death, That I may tell of all Your praise In the gates of the daughter of Zion. I will rejoice in Your salvation.

The nations have sunk down in the pit which they have made; In the net which they hid, their own foot is caught. The LORD is known by the judgment He executes; The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. Meditation.

The wicked shall be turned into hell, And all the nations that forget God. For the needy shall not always be forgotten; The expectation of the poor shall not perish forever.

Arise, O LORD, Do not let man prevail; Let the nations be judged in Your sight. Put them in fear, O LORD, That the nations may know themselves to be but men.

[At Psalm 9 the numerical divergence begins between the Septuagint (LXX) and the Masoretic Text. In the LXX Psalms 9 and 10 are combined. Both 9 and 10 are militant psalms, dealing with the destruction of the enemies of the Lord; they are seen as being fulfilled in the Resurrection of Christ. Both psalms declare the many works of Christ in triumphing over His enemies.]



(Source: The Orthodox Study Bible, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, Tennessee 1997)

The Importance and Value of Memorial Services: Part 4

SCRIPTUAL & OTHER EVIDENCE FOR THE IMPORTANCE AND VALUE OF MEMORIAL SERVICES

B. Evidence from the Church's Holy Tradition

4) *Church Testimonies*

Dositheos, Patriarch of Jerusalem: A local council that took place in Jerusalem in 1672 considered the subject of memorial services, and this indicates the magnitude of the issue. For the fact that a local council was compelled to take a stand on this subject shows that it was not simply a side issue among the many other questions of faith.

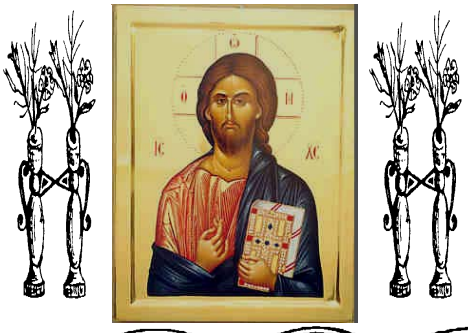
In the 18th clause of his testimony, Patriarch Dositheos states: "We believe that the souls of those who have passed away are either in a state of comfort or of hardship, depending on the deeds which each of them performed…." "The dead can be liberated through extreme goodness, through the prayers of priests, and through charitable deeds that are performed on their behalf by their relatives; furthermore, the bloodless sacrifice of the Holy Eucharist has great power, whether it is performed by relatives on behalf of a particular person who has departed or is one of the daily liturgies that are performed by the Catholic and Apostolic Church on behalf of all the deceased as a whole." Naturally, it goes without saying that we do not know when their deliverance occurs. "We know and believe that such souls can be freed from their hardships before the common resurrection of all and the final judgment, but we do not know when this occurs."

5) *The Lives of the Saints*

The lives of the saints demonstrate the benefits that result from memorial services.

The following event is reported from the life of **St Makarios of Egypt**. As he was walking in the desert one day, he came across a human skull. He tapped it with his staff and asked, "Who are you?" The skull replied that he had been the high priest of the idols and the idol worshippers that used to live in the region. "You are Makarios, the Confessor," he said. "Know that when you feel compassion for those in hell and pray for them, their fetters are slightly loosened and they find some relief."

In the life of **St Thekla** we are told that after she was arrested by the ruler Alexander, he placed her in the custody of *Tryphaina*, a wealthy noblewoman, who was to guard her until the time came for her to be thrown to the wild beasts. Now *Tryphaina's* daughter had died a few days earlier, and this girl appeared to her mother in a dream and said: "Mother, love this stranger Thekla and keep her as your daughter in my place, for she is a servant of God and can pray for me so that the Lord will place me among the righteous." When *Tryphaina* awoke she immediately went to the saint and said: "My child, I beseech you, please do me this kindness and pray to your Christ, that he may give rest to my daughter's soul in eternal life, for she asked this of me in a dream." St Thekla then lifted her hands to heaven and prayed: "My Lord, Jesus Christ, son of the true and living God, hear me, your servant, and give rest to *Phalkonilla* in eternal life, according to your holy will." *(See Synaxarion for September 24).*



(To be continued)

(Source: The Memorial Services & their benefits by Hieromonk Benedict, New Skete, Mt Athos, 2002)

Orthodox Christian Calendar 2007

This monthly (x2) calendar is provided for your information. It aims to give you an insight into the Orthodox Christian Church year of 2007 and hopes to prove useful and beneficial with its indications. The calendar provides you with a day-by-day outlook of the following pieces of information: **1. The Greater Feast days (†)** celebrated in the Orthodox Christian Church. **2. The main fasting and non-fasting periods** in the Church and the strictness of each of these fasts. **3. The schedule of English Divine Liturgies**, where these are held and at what time. **4. Main Vespers Services** held at each of our Melbourne, VIC Parishes (commence 7p.m.) **5. Public Holidays** and **other events** held.

Month of December

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
30 † SUNDAY BEFORE EPIPHANY	31 VESPERS: ST VASSILIOS, BRUNSWICK					1
2 † 14TH SUNDAY OF LUKE	3	4 † ST. BARBARA THE GREAT MARTYR	5 † ST. SAVVA THE CONSECRATED VESPERS: ST NICHOLAS, YARRAVILLE	6 † ST. NICHOLAS BISHOP OF MYRA IN LYCIA	7	8 ENGLISH LITURGY AT GEELONG MONASTERY, 9.00 – 10.00 am
9† 10TH SUNDAY OF LUKE *(Conception of St Anna Mother of the Theotokos)*	10	11 VESPERS FOR ST SPYRIDON AT THE PRESENTATION OF OUR LORD, COBURG	12 † ST. SPYRIDON BISHOP OF TRMYTHOUS THE MIRACLE-WORKER	13	14	15 † ST. ELEFTHERIOS
16 † 11TH SUNDAY OF LUKE *(Sunday of the Holy Forefathers of Christ)*	17 † ST DIONYSIOS OF ZAKYNTHOS	18	19	20 † ST IGNATIUS	21	22
23 † SUNDAY BEFORE THE BIRTH OF CHRIST CHRISTMAS CAROLS AT FESTIVAL HALL: 6.00—8.00 p.m.	24 *(Christmas Eve)*	25 † THE BIRTH OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST *(CHRISTMAS DAY—Fast Ends)*	26 † SYNAXIS OF THE HOLY THEOTOKOS *(Boxing Day)* *(No fasting)*	27 †ST STEPHEN THE FIRST MARTYR *(No fasting)*	28 *(No fasting)*	29

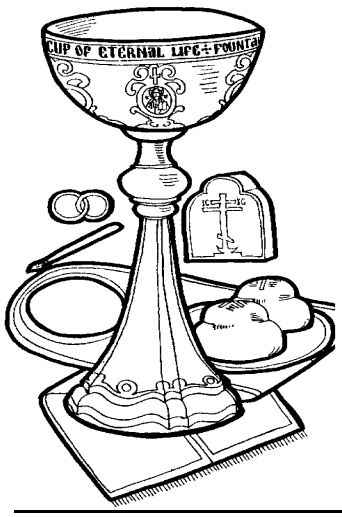
Month of January 2008

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 † THE CIRCUMSICION OF OUR LORD ST BASIL THE GREAT	2 *(No fasting)* *Cutting of the Vasilopitta at St Eustathios Church, South Melbourne,*	3	4 *(No fasting)*	5 EVE OF EPIPHANY *(Fasting Day)* VESPERS:THEOFANIA, FRANKSTON
6 † EPIPHANY [BLESSING OF THE WATERS CEREMONY AT STATION PIER, PORT MELBOURNE, 12.30 p.m.] VESPERS: ST JOHN, CARLTON	7 † *SYNAXIS OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST AND FORERUNNER*	8	9	10	11	12
13 † SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY	14	15	16 VESPERS: ST ANTHONY, SUNSHINE	17 † ST ANTHONY THE GREAT VESPERS: ST ATHANASIOS, SPRINGVALE	18 † ST ATHANASIOS & CYRIL PATRIARCHS OF ALEXANDRIA	19 ENGLISH LITURGY AT GEELONG MONASTERY, 9.00 – 10.00 am
20 † 15TH SUNDAY OF LUKE *(St Efthimios the Great)*	21	22	23	24	25 † ST GREGORY THE THEOLOGIAN	26 AUSTRALIA DAY *(Public Holiday)*
27 † TRANSPOSITION OF THE RELICS OF ST JOHN CHRYSOSTOM	28	29 VESPERS: THE THREE HIERARCHS, CLAYTON	30 † THE THREE HIERARCHS	31		

The Divine Liturgy and other Holy Services in English

Programme for 2008

Date		Location	Time
Saturday	19 January	Geelong Monastery	9.00—10.00 a.m.
Saturday	9 February	Geelong Monastery	9.00—10.00 a.m.
Tuesday	26 February	St Eustathios, South Melbourne	7.30—8.45 p.m.
Tuesday	18 March	St Eustathios (Great Compline)	7.30—8.30 p.m.
Saturday	22 March	Geelong Monastery	9.00—10.00 a.m.
Tuesday	8 April	St Eustathios (Great Compline)	7.30—8.30 p.m.
Saturday	12 April	Geelong Monastery	9.00—10.00 a.m.
Saturday	10 May	Geelong Monastery	9.00—10.00 a.m.
Tuesday	13 May	St Eustathios, South Melbourne	7.30—8.45 p.m.
Saturday	7 June	Geelong Monastery	9.00—10.00 a.m.
Tuesday	17 June	St Eustathios, South Melbourne	7.30—8.45 p.m.
Saturday	12 July	Geelong Monastery	9.00—10.00 a.m.
Tuesday	15 July	St Eustathios, South Melbourne	7.30—8.45 p.m.
Saturday	9 August	Geelong Monastery	9.00—10.00 a.m.
Tuesday	12 August	St Eustathios (Paraklisis)	7.30—8.45 p.m.
Saturday	6 September	Geelong Monastery	9.00—10.00 a.m.
Tuesday	9 September	St Eustathios, South Melbourne	7.30—8.45 p.m.
Saturday	11 October	Geelong Monastery	9.00—10.00 a.m.
Tuesday	14 October	St Eustathios, South Melbourne	7.30—8.45 p.m.
Saturday	15 November	Geelong Monastery	9.00—10.00 a.m.
Tuesday	18 November	St Eustathios, South Melbourne	7.30—8.45 p.m.
Saturday	13 December	Geelong Monastery	9.00—10.00 a.m.



Addresses and Contact Details

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Panagia Gorgoepikoos
Cnr Cox and Rollins Rds
Lovely Banks, Geelong
Phone: (03) 5276 1221

St Eustathios Church
221 Dorcas Street
South Melbourne
Phone: (03) 9690 1595
Mobile: 0417 596 001

***Note*: Services at GEELONG MONASTERY are preceded by Greek/English Matins from 8.00 a.m. and all Services are Divine Liturgies unless specified otherwise.**

The Greek Orthodox

Archdiocese

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the

Annual

Christmas Carols

on Sunday 23 December 2007

6.00 - 8.00 p.m.

at

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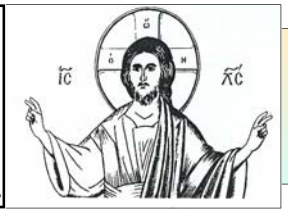

Youth Group Meetings in Victoria

Ascot Vale: St. Dimitrios
Tuesday 7.30 p.m. **(9375 1119)**

Brunswick: St. Basil
Wednesday 6.30 p.m. **(9387 7693)**

Clayton: Three Hierarchs
Monday 7.30 p.m. **(9544 5706)**

Coburg: Presentation of our Lord
Tuesday 7.45 p.m. **(9350 5559)**

Dandenong: St. Panteleimon
Thursday 7.30 p.m. **(9791 8369)**
(www.dandenongyouth.com)

East Keilor: Panagia Soumela
Monday 7.00 p.m. **(9331 2010)**

East Malvern: St. Catherine
Tuesday 7.30 p.m. **(9563 6623)**

Fawkner: St.Nektarios
Wednesday 7.00 p.m. **(9359 4404)**

Forest Hill: St Andrew
Monday 7.30 p.m. **(9802 0165)**

Northcote: Axion Esti Monastery
Monday 7.30 p.m. **(9481 7826)**

Oakleigh: Sts. Anargyri,
Tuesday 7.30 p.m. **(9569 6874)**

Richmond: Holy Trinity
Thursday 7.30 p.m. **(9428 1284)**
parishofholytrinityrichmond@yahoo.com

South Melbourne: St. Eustathios
Tuesday 7.30 p.m. **(9690 1595)**

Springvale: St. Athanasios,
Saturday 6.00 p.m. **(9547 8610)**

Templestowe: St. Haralambos
Tuesday 8.30 p.m. **(9846 4066)**

Thomastown: Transfiguration of the Lord,
Thursday 7.30 p.m. **(9465 9907)**

Yarraville: St. Nicholas
Tuesday 7.30 p.m. **(9687 1513)**

Icon of Saint Nestor from the Monastery of Stavronikita (Mount Athos) by Theophan the Cretan